Early days in Jefferson County /

EARLY DAYS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY.

BY ELISHA W. KEYES.

I remember that once, when I was a boy in Vermont, my father procured an old-fashioned atlas with the apparently unsettled Northwest Territory traced upon it; and, calling my elder brothers about him, pointed with his forefinger on the map to that portion of the Territory which began about the southern point of Lake Michigan and extended therefrom in a northwesterly direction. He pointed to the mouth of the Milwaukee river; and said he, “Boys, there's where we want to go; that country offers a splendid inducement for settlers. There,” said he, “must be water-powers and timber.” At this time I was but seven years of age; still I remember the deep interest I took in the conversation and the impression that it made upon my mind.

Following this discussion about the locality, in the year 1836 my father wended his way hither, coming to Milwaukee and later to Jefferson county, and finally making claims in that portion of the county known as Lake Mills, though the land was not then in the market.1 Having made up his

1 Capt. Joseph Keyes was born at Putney, Vermont, Nov. 20, 1795, and followed his father's trade, that of a mill-wright. He first came to Wisconsin on a prospecting tour, in June, 1836. During the autumn of 1836, he spent some time at Menomonee, north of Green Bay; at this place he dressed the lumber for a house, which he took to Milwaukee on a vessel, in December, and erected a dwelling there which was standing in 1874. In the fall of 1837, as related by the author, he became the founder of Lake Mills, where he built and operated a saw-mill. He subsequently erected a gristmill at Lake Mills and other mills at Cambridge, Dane county. The first school-house in Lake Mills was erected in 1841 by Captain Keyes, who himself employed and paid Miss Rosa Catlin to teach in it. Miss

Catlin subsequently became the wife of La Fayette Kellogg, for many years clerk of the state supreme court. A son of the captain, Simon S. Keyes, was elected the first school clerk, Oct. 7, 1843, upon the organization of the Lake Mills school district. Abel Keyes, the father of Joseph, died in 1843, his being, it is reported, the first white death in the village. Abel was born at Putney, Vt., Sept. 11, 1773, and was largely instrumental in the early advancement of Northfield and neighboring villages, being a builder and owner of grist and saw-mills, machine shops, hotels and dwelling-houses. In 1839, he removed from Vermont to Illinois, and a year later to the home of his son Joseph, at Lake Mills. A sketch of Abel Keyes's busy career will be found in John Gregory's *Hist. Northfield, Vt*. (Montpelier, 1878), p. 123. In 1850, Joseph Keyes removed to Menasha, and erected one of the first saw-mills there. He afterwards resided in Madison, until about 1859, when he returned to Menasha, where he was appointed register of the United States land office. The closing years of his life were spent in retirement. He died in Menasha, Sept. 17, 1874, aged 79 years, having been among the most honored and useful of the pioneers of Wisconsin. His kindly heart and manly bearing in all the walks of life will long be remembered by the old settlers of both Jefferson and Winnebago counties.— Ed.

417 mind to settle at that point, he communicated with my mother, then resident with her children at Northfield, Vermont, and arranged that the family should start for the country that had just been erected into Wisconsin Territory.

In pursuance of this determination, on the 2d day of May, 1837, the family,—consisting of my mother, three sons and one daughter—started in wagons with their few household goods, for Burlington, upon Lake Champlain, thence by steamboat to White Hall, and from that point by canal. Near Utica, N. Y., my father met us, upon our way, and guided us to our new home. Embarking at Buffalo upon the steamboat Bunker Hill, we lauded in Detroit. From Detroit we traveled in covered wagons along the swampy roads of Michigan and through northern Indiana to Chicago, and finally emerged in the afternoon of the 17th day of June, 1837, from the heavy timber upon the banks of the Milwaukee river, at what was

then known as Walker's Point. We resided in Milwaukee until autumn, during which time I attended school in the old court-house of that place.

Milwaukee, though but a village of a few hundred inhabitants, was the largest and most important point, if I remember rightly, in all the vast expanse of country west of Lake Michigan. But my father was desirous of reaching the 27 418 point selected by him the year before at the lake in Jefferson county; therefore, in the latter part of September, we were on the move again to reach what we had pictured to be the “promised land.”

We left Milwaukee with two teams, one of which was a wagon drawn by oxen. We passed through Prairieville, now Waukesha, which town had only one log house,1 and crossed Summit prairie and through Oconomowoc, until we struck the woods, through which we traveled until we reached the present site of the city of Watertown. All the improvements we found at that place were the foundations for a saw-mill, and one log house. A little beyond Watertown was a log house occupied by a family named Johnson,2 where we stayed over night.

1 *Hist. Waukesha Co*. (West. Hist. Co., 1880), p. 634, says that at that time A. R. Cutler had a claim shanty, “erected in May, 1834, near where Blair's machine shop now is;” M. D. Cutler, soon afterward, had erected a log house “near where his present residence is;” while James Buckner had a log tavern, the Prairieville house, erected in 1837; David Jackson had also a log house, in which the postoffice was kept, and there was a log hut which Solomon Juneau had occasionally used as a trading post. There were a few other log houses out on the prairie, at Bethesda spring and down the river. But all of these buildings were widely separated in the thick underbrush and timber patches, and Buckner's tavern was probably the only one seen by the Keyes family.— Ed.

2 Timothy Johnson, the first white settler in what is now the city of Watertown, was born at Middletown, Conn., June 28, 1792. After wandering through the east and south, he reached Racine, Wisconsin, then composed of but a few shanties, in the fall of 1835.

In January, 1836, he was at Wisconsin City (now Janesville), where, on the 18th day of November, 1835, John Inman and his party had made the first white settlement in what is now Rock county. Going to Rockford, Illinois, for provisions, Johnson returned to Wisconsin City in February, the same month that Henry F. Janes made his claim there. Not satisfied there, however, Johnson proceeded up the Rock river to within about two miles below the present site of Jefferson, where he built a log house, cleared a garden patch and “made short excursions about the country.”— *Hist. Jefferson Co*. (West. Hist. Co., 1879), p. 401. In one of these explorations he discovered what soon became known as Johnson's Rapids (now Watertown). He staked out a claim of one thousand acres there, the greater part of the city of Watertown now occupying it. In June, 1836, he allowed Philander Baldwin, Reeve Griswold and Charles Seaton to erect temporary cabins on his land at Johnson's Rapids. In the fall, he went to Milwaukee, where his family had recently arrived from Ohio, and proceeded with them to the Rapids,—arriving there Dec. 10, 1836, after suffering many hardships from cold and a total lack of highways. The *Hist. of Waukesha Co.*, before cited, gives, pp. 336, 401, some thrilling pictures of Johnson's experiences, in this and other expeditions. He is said to have been the first white man to discover the prehistoric earthworks at Aztalan.

The “foundations for a saw-mill,” which Colonel Keyes alludes to, were, at the time he passed through Watertown, being put in by Luther A. Cole, who was “working on the saw-mill and dam for Charles F. H. Goodhue & Son,”—claimed to be the first improvement of the water-power on Rock river, either in Wisconsin or Illinois. The “one log house” seen by Colonel Keyes was probably that, on the west side, built by Capt. James Rogan,—the “Co.” of the saw-mill firm,—in January, 1837. Rogan's shanty was the headquarters for all new arrivals, and was known for a long time as “the leading hotel at Johnson's Rapids.” There was another shanty at Watertown, however, at the time of Colonel Keyes's visit. It was that of Cole, who kept bachelors' hall with his brother, John W., and their companion pioneer, Amasa Hyland.— Ed.

The next day was to finish our journey, and we reached the ford at Milford just as the sun was declining in the west, and were ferried across in a boat constructed of two Indian canoes, with split basswood planks upon which the wagon rested, the horses and cattle fording the stream. We were aided in this effort by two old bachelors named respectively Drake and Bartlett,1 who had a cabin there near the bank of the river. After crossing the river we struck across the opening, with no road, not even an Indian trail, seeing no human being, nor even a shanty, until after dark, when we struck the present site of Lake Mills, where, near the lake, we found a floorless shanty shingled with a hay stack. In this we made ourselves as comfortable as we could. It was necessary to have a better habitation than this to live in during the winter, and my father proceeded at once to construct a log house, which was built and ready for occupancy before very cold weather came.2 In this house we lived for several years. My father had selected this site upon the stream near the lake, with the intention of constructing a

1 L. P. Drake and M. L. Bartlett, the first settlers in the town of Milford.— Ed.

2 Capt. Joseph Keyes was the first white settler in what is now the village of Lake Mills.— Ed.

420 saw-mill there; and in the winter of 1837—38, and the spring of 1838, his efforts were devoted in that direction until the mill was completed,—which, I think, was the first one in Jefferson county.1

1 It is stated in *Hist. Jefferson Co.*, p. 336, that the first saw-mill in Jefferson county was erected during the summer of 1836, at Hebron, on Bark river, and was “completed and ready for work in the winter of 1836–37.” Goodhue's saw-mill, at Watertown, previously alluded to, was turning out lumber by December, 1837. Royal Tyler's narrative, in *Hist. Jefferson Co.*, p. 540, says: “The first saw-mill in the village of Lake Mills was built by Capt. Joseph Keyes, which went into operation in the fall of 1839. In the fall of 1842, Captain Keyes erected the first grist-mill in the county of Jefferson, on the same water-power as

the saw-mill named above." Enoch G. Darling, however, is credited (*Id.*, p. 336) with erecting the first grist-mill in the county, at Hebron, in the summer of 1837.— Ed.

By these means and under these circumstances were my father's family transferred from their old home in the state of Vermont to their new home in the Territory of Wisconsin. Our settlement at Lake Mills occurred in September, 1837.

My recollection of these early scenes, and the incidents connected therewith, are as fresh in my memory today as though they had just occurred. There were then but very few settlers within the present limits of Jefferson county. There were settlements at Watertown, Aztalan, Jefferson, Fort Atkinson and Lake Mills, comprising only a very few persons at each point.

These early settlers were inspired not a little by the spirit of adventure. They left their homes in New England and New York, where the most of them were born, to better their condition. They had read the wonderful tales which had been told of this splendid country, and came to it to make homes for themselves and their families. They did not at first realize the hardships they would be obliged to undergo, the privations they would have to endure, and the many discouragements that were sure to meet them in every step of their progress. If they had, I believe many of them would have remained at home.

The first thing they had to do upon arriving here was to roll up a log cabin and furnish a place wherein their families could live. But very little furniture could be brought 421 from their old homes; only a very few articles which were most essential could be transported at that time: no chairs, no tables, no bed-steads—nothing but the old traditional feather bed and a meager lot of crockery for the table.

I remember very well the construction of our log house. Logs were rolled one upon another, and between the logs were put wedges of split oak, filled or "chinked" in with mud from the bank. The floors were made from plank split from oak; and the shingles were turned out in the same manner. The table which we used for many years was made from

oak, and the chairs we possessed were simply three-legged stools with plank to cover the three legs; old settlers have a keen recollection of them. In the end of the log house was an old-fashioned chimney, made in the usual manner. It was many years after this log house was constructed, before a frame house was erected in that portion of the county. These old landmarks have now almost wholly disappeared, and with the old pioneers will soon have returned to dust.

The early settlers of Jefferson county, so far as I can remember, were all men of small means. They had but little money. Many of them found it difficult to furnish bread for their families during the time the ground was being cleared and broken in order to produce a crop. The first township organization was Jefferson, including Aztalan, Milford, Lake Mills and Waterloo. At this time, and for several years subsequent, provisions were very high, and the market for the early settlers was Milwaukee, some fifty or more miles distant, with the roads almost impassable. I remember that in the spring of 1838 we got out of provisions, and my father started for Milwaukee for some flour and pork. The weather was unpropitious, the roads were very bad, and after an absence of over three weeks, during which period his family were much alarmed about his safety, he returned; having spent all of his money for just one barrel of flour. This was, before long, nearly all loaned out to the settlers who had not money enough even for their necessary wants. A kindly and fraternal feeling prevailed most emphatically among all the early settlers. There was no 422 fighting, no wrangling. They all agreed and were desirous of helping one another and sustaining one another in whatever they had on hand to do. If one had a barrel of flour or a little pork, he most cheerfully loaned a portion of it to his neighbor, and thus some families were enabled to subsist, that otherwise would certainly have gone hungry.

It hardly seems possible in this day of plenty to realize the condition of things which then existed. There was a period when the settlers in the vicinity of Lake Mills and Aztalan really suffered from hunger; they were apprehensive that they and their families might starve to death. I remember a meeting held one Sunday, in a log house at Aztalan occupied by Captain Brayton,1 where the settlers came together to consider this difficult

problem which had become to them a serious one: that is, what they were to do for something to eat. At this meeting, the oxen in the settlement, which were about the only beasts of burden, were counted up, and an estimate made as to how long the band of settlers could subsist upon them, in case they should be reduced to that extremity. The question was most carefully and prayerfully considered by the men and women who were present at this meeting. I have seen my father with his head bowed low upon his hands, in deep thought and meditation, and when my mother attempted to arouse him by the inquiry, “Joseph, what is the matter?” he would lift his head and say, “Olive, I know not where we are to get provisions to live upon much longer.”

1 Thomas Brayton, who, with Timothy Johnson, before mentioned, visited Aztalan, October 31, 1836,—the first white men to seek a site for settlement there. Brayton opened a public house for land-hunters and travelers, his family arriving at Aztalan, July 1, 1837. His uncle William, and brothers Jeremiah and Alfred A., soon joined him. In the spring of 1838, Alfred's daughter, Aztaline, was born, and is claimed to have been the first white girl born in that vicinity. Jeremiah lived on the banks of Crawfish river, two miles below Aztalan settlement; his daughter, Louisa M., was the pioneer school-teacher of Madison (see Thwaites's *Hist. Sketch of Public Schools of Madison, Wis.*, p. 67). Alfred A. opened the first store in Aztalan, in 1841.— Ed.

I remember one instance when we were entirely out of provisions of every kind, and my father started in the afternoon for Captain Brayton's, at Aztalan, to see if he could 423 not borrow a few pounds of flour. The sun went down and he had not yet returned; darkness came, and my mother and the children were much worried for fear some accident had befallen him. He had gone on horseback leaving one horse in the stable. Along about nine o'clock we heard the neighing of a horse in the distance, which was answered by another horse in the stable, and shortly after my father emerged from the opening across the creek and soon reached the door, leading his horse, and from the open door and by the light of the fire which shone through it, we saw something had happened to him. He held in his arms a little bag or bundle, and the first remark he made to my mother was, “Olive, we are

ruined." He proceeded to relate that upon his homeward way, in crossing the big slough, his horse had stumbled upon the logs and had thrown him and the bag of flour he carried, into the mire, where horse and rider and flour remained until he could pick himself up. He then grasped the bag of flour and carried it to dry land, the horse following. Thence he wended his way homeward. The flour had been soaked in the slough, and he had reason to think that it was entirely destroyed; but my mother, who always endeavored to comfort him, said that perhaps it was not so bad after all. The horse was put in the log stable, and the flour was brought in and laid upon the floor, and my father and mother and the children gathered around the bag as its strings were unfastened, expecting to find the flour mixed with mud and water. As the top of the bag was opened, sure enough so it appeared, but soon the dough cracked open and inside there appeared good, dry flour. The bag was carefully turned backwards and the dry flour taken out. After all had been secured, then the dough, the result of the mixture of the marsh water with the flour, was carefully scraped off and sacredly preserved and eaten by the family. For a little while we had two kinds of bread upon the table; that made of this mixture I have spoken of, for us children, and the better quality for the older people. But we children did not complain; we were satisfied with it because it would appease our hunger.1

1 *Hist. Jefferson Co.*, p. 538.— Ed.

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The early settlers were not good huntsmen, nor expert fishermen. They had to learn these high arts by practice. In those days there were no breech-loading arms. If a man could get hold of a flint-lock fusee from an Indian for a little barter, and use that for his gun, he was doing exceedingly well. It was a long time before any white man proved himself smart enough to shoot a deer; it was said that because they had the buck fever1 so badly, their Steadiness of nerve was not sufficient to bring down such game, although the woods were filled with it. There were deer in great abundance, prairie chickens, partridges, ducks and

geese. At that time there were no quails or rabbits,—I always supposed for the reason that the wolves and foxes destroyed them.

1 Pioneer slang for the species of nervousness engendered in amateur hunters by the sudden appearance of big game.— Ed.

The streams were full of fish. One of the most useful and substantial articles of diet was the sucker, which was found in Rock river, in the Crawfish, and in the lakes, where they could be obtained in wagon loads, almost. Reaching the lake a little late in the fall we of course did not “catch onto” the ways of the fish, but the following spring the great wealth of our lakes and streams was most singularly unfolded to us. Our log house was upon the banks of the stream. A little way from the house was the log stable, and near this stable a small dam had been constructed to raise the water on a level with the banks so the horses could drink more easily. It was spring time. The snow had gone but the ice was not all out of the lake, and the water in the creek was singing merrily as it proceeded on its way. Just at sundown, one day, my younger brother2 and myself went to water the horses, and we went to this rise of water above the dam where they were in the habit of drinking. In looking into the stream we discovered that its bottom was literally covered with very large fish. I called out to my elder brother Abe,3 to come there and see what all that meant. He at once took in the situation and ran to the stable, and soon came back with pitchforks, and we commenced sticking

2 Oliver A. Keyes, now of Menasha, born in Northfield. Vt., 1831.— Ed.

3 Abel Keyes, now of Menasha, born in Northfield, Vt., 1822.— Ed.

425 them into the bodies of the fish. Very soon my father was called, and we all pitchforked those suckers until late in the evening, not desisting until we had secured at least a wheelbarrow full. It was with great satisfaction that my father remarked to my mother, “Now we are all right. There is no danger of starving when we can get plenty of fish, and the indications are, that the supply will be fully equal to the demand.” As soon

as we could secure a plentiful supply, we had fish for breakfast, fish for dinner and fish for supper, and fish all the time.

We had a young, green fellow, a sort of Pennsylvania Dutchman, who had wandered west, working for my father. He was possessed of an enormous appetite, and he also seemed possessed of great courage, for he never seemed to fear that he might choke himself with fish bones. The rest of us were a little careful upon that point, and looked over our fish with care; but Lawrence Becker had a knack of eating fish that double-discounted ours, and it was popularly said that he could shovel the fish in at one corner of his mouth and the bones would fly out at the other. His skill in this respect was certainly wonderful, and my statements in regard to it are not in the least exaggerated. All of the old settlers will remember that it was a common remark, that they had for so long a time been restricted to a fish diet that they did not make an attempt for months to change their shirts, the fish bones sticking through and preventing such an operation.

It is true that at this time we occasionally got hold of a little of what was called “Hoosier” pork, which found its way up from southern Illinois.1 The pork, it was said, was made from a class of hogs whose snouts were so long they could reach through the fence and root up the third row of potatoes. The pork was so very poor and lean that we had to catch fish and save fat enough from the latter to fry the pork in. But with this pork and the fish, and corn bread,

1 It is recorded that a party of land prospectors, in the spring of 1837, paid Mrs. Robert Masters, of Jefferson, $1 per peck for oats; pork was $21 and flour $41 per barrel; cows were worth $40 per head, and a yoke of oxen would bring $150.— Ed.

 which variety at times constituted our whole bread diet, we managed to get along. As I have said, it was a long time before the settlers got into the knack of procuring game, either venison or the wild fowl, in much quantity.

In this age of luxury and plenty, when scarcely any one goes hungry, or certainly need not, it would seem very strange if the father of the family should, as the members of his household came around the table, be obliged to divide up the food into so many equal parts, and say to each one, “This much you can have and no more;” but in those early times it was practiced frequently, and many times have I known it to be done by my father in his family.

The first settlers in Jefferson county were, I think, in every instance American-born. The great tide of foreign immigration, which, since that time, has set in so strongly westward, had not then begun, and it was a number of years after the first settlers came to Jefferson county before the foreign born sought homes there. The first settlement of Germans was near Jefferson,1 and the first German girl I ever saw was engaged in my father's family as a domestic.

1 Germans first arrived at Jefferson in the spring of 1842. Most of the new-comers settled in the village. Among them was John Rockdæschel, the first cobbler in the place— Ed.

She was a girl of good birth and education, who came there and was willing to work in order to learn the English language; and when she had acquired that she returned to her home near Jefferson. That was a period before “hired girls” became an institution. There were no Germans, Norwegians or Irish. There were no girls that sought employment of this character, and if there were any in the settlement who were willing to assist their neighbors in domestic matters, they were daughters of American parents and not ashamed to work out. They were all treated as members of the family, and as a matter of course ate at the first table. In this respect time has changed matters very much indeed.

Only five years before our settlement in Lake Mills had the Black Hawk war been concluded. Black Hawk and his band were pursued through this section of the Territory by regular troops, by volunteers and by friendly Indians, in 427 greater numbers than he possessed. His stronghold was at the head of Lake Koshkonong, and it was from this

stronghold that two young girls named Rachel and Sylvia Hall, who had been stolen by Black Hawk and his band from their parents near Ottawa, Illinois, were ransomed by the payment of $2,000 by some friendly Winnebagoes, who represented the Indian agent at Galena. In this pursuit, Black Hawk's line of flight was from Lake Koshkonong towards Whitewater, through Bark-river woods, where he crossed the river, not far from Jefferson Junction, and then went on westward through Lake Mills, Cottage Grove and Madison, to the Wisconsin river, where the battle occurred and where the destruction of his band was made almost complete.1

1 For account of operations of the Black Hawk war in Wisconsin, in 1832, see early volumes of *Wis. Hist. Colls.* and *Mag. Western Hist.* for Nov. and Dec., 1886.— Ed.

As I have said, only five years had elapsed after the Black Hawk raid when we settled in Lake Mills; and at that time, and for many years afterward, the country was swarming with Indians, mostly Winnebagoes, who were friendly, although at times the settlers were made to feel alarm at the reports which came to them of the murderous intent of the aborigines. Still, no serious injury was ever inflicted by them upon the early settlers of Jefferson county. The Indians seemed to respect our rights—at least were disposed to do so as long as their own rights were respected by the white settlers. At that time they were a splendid race of men, of fine physical proportions, and impressed one very strongly with the nobility of their race. They had not then become demoralized or debased by intercourse with the whites.

A band of Indians dressed in their war paint, once caused me a terrible fright. We were surprised in the forenoon by a caller at our house, and my mother, when she came to take account of stock, found that she had neither tea nor coffee; so it was decided that I should go to the nearest neighbor, about a mile and a half distant, to see if I could borrow a small quantity of one of these articles. When about a half mile from the house I espied in the path before 428 me a dozen or more Indians. As they had also seen me, it was of no use to retreat and therefore I made up my mind to go ahead. As I came alongside of these

stalwart fellows, I noticed that they had formed some plan in reference to myself, and they commenced trying to pull me off the pony, jabbering and insisting that it was their pony; but I stuck to the animal, not believing that they had any serious intention of doing me an injury. After they had frolicked with me as long as they wished, they allowed me to break away from them, and I put my pony to the top of his speed. One of the Indians chased me a long distance, and he being able to outrun the pony, when he got near enough he would bend upon one knee and point his gun at me, and the powder would flash in the pan without doing me any injury. It was, however, enough to frighten me almost to death. Finally, he tired of the fun and I proceeded on my way, and succeeded in borrowing enough coffee for a drawing and returned home, where I found the Indians. My brother asked the leader what their intentions were in regard to me, and he said they did not intend to hurt me; they simply wanted to frighten the little papoose.

Quite a trade was carried on with the Indians by the setlers, and many a fine piece of venison was secured, or a package of valuable furs, for a very small sum. That which they most sought after was whisky, and it was that which no honest settler would ever deal out to them, because it was only when maddened by fire-water that they became at all dangerous; therefore, it was for this very prudent reason that there was scarcely ever a white man found, in our section, mean enough to sell it to them.

Those of the settlers who became domiciled in the fall of 1837 were prepared in the spring of 1838 to spade or break up a patch of ground, and to plant potatoes and other vegetables to a small extent, which proved of great assistance. At first there was very little sickness; but as the land became broken up and otherwise improved, fevers, particularly ague fever, prevailed very generally, and I presume there is not an old settler living in Jefferson county who has not had some terrible experience with the “shakes” which he will 429 never forget. The change from east to west was a striking one in many respects. The climate was different;the water and the food were very different. I know there was one trouble from which nearly all of the old settlers suffered, which was attributed to a variety of causes. It was a disease that was never known to prove fatal, though it was very

annoying and frequently productive of a good deal of profanity; but it had to be endured as patiently as possible, for, as I remember, there were no means ever discovered to cure it. It really had to wear itself out. I allude to that old affliction which the old settlers certainly cannot have forgotten, known as prairie itch. It was very amusing at times to see a whole family out around a log house, leaning against the butt ends of the logs, scratching first one shoulder and then the other, reaching points that they could not easily touch with their hands. One mill-hand whom we had at work for us, had this thing lay hold of him most savagely. He said he never was so happy, never felt so well in his life, as he did when he stood before a rousing fire at night time and could scratch.

In those early days, dogs were reasonably plenty and cats correspondingly scarce. A good cat was worth a five-dollar bill. It is true there were not many mice in the country at that time; perhaps none, except a few that had found a quiet corner in some box of goods, and thus been brought from the east. Still, the women could not be perfectly happy unless they had a cat. I remember the great interest which centered around the first one we possessed, which was a beautiful animal, and there was great strife between the members of the household to see who should have the cat for a sleeping companion. In the cold weather, the fur of the cat was very comfortable.

In the winter of 1838–39, a young topographical engineer, who surveyed the road from Madison to Milwaukee by way of Lake Mills, was a member of our family, and while there he spent a good deal of his time making maps of his surveys of the road. He became very much attached to this cat, and he would catch it in his arms in the early evening and go up the ladder to bed among the first, so that he could 430 monopolize the cat. This man afterwards, as years rolled one, became well known throughout the country. He was a general in the army of the Union during the war of the rebellion, and afterwards a prominent federal official in Chicago. I allude to Gen. J. D. Webster.

As I have said, the utmost good feeling prevailed among all of the early settlers. Any note of trouble, any sound of alarm, any call for assistance, no matter what it might be, was

responded to with alacrity. I remember on one cold winter night, when the dogs were barking, there sounded from the openings a loud halloo! My father dressed himself, and going to the door answered it. Very soon a man appeared, to arouse our household. He said that old Uncle John Atwood1 was lost; it was feared that he might have been frozen to death, and he must be found and cared for. He was the oldest man in the neighborhood. He had gone out in the day-time and had wandered too far and could not retrace his steps. A general search was instituted, and after a while he was found and returned to his log-cabin home. He had the discretion, on finding a hay-stack a mile or more away, to stick to it until he heard the calls of those in search. I know it created quite an excitement at that time, for fear he was lost and frozen to death.

1 E. L. Atwood settled in the town of Lake Mills in May, 1837, being joined by his sisters,—Elvira and Ann,—in July, 1838. In October following, their parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Atwood, arrived, with other members of the family. This settlement of the old people, in what is now the town of Lake Mills, was almost identical with the arrival of the Keyes family in what afterwards became the village. Mrs. John Atwood died in November, 1845.— Ed.

The Winnebagoes under the treaty2 had no right in Jefferson county and this portion of the state, but still they lingered. They hated to leave the land of their fathers.

2 Of Sept. 15, 1832, at Rock Island, by which the Winnebagoes ceded to the United States all the lands to which they laid claim “south and east of the Wisconsin river and the Fox river of Green Bay.” There being some doubt raised, in later years, as to the extent of this ceded tract, a treaty with the Winnebagoes was concluded at Washington—proclaimed June 16, 1838—by which the “Winnebago nation of Indians ceded to the United States all their land east of the Mississippi river.”— Ed.

431 They refused to go. In 18411 a company of United States dragoons, about a hundred strong, passed through Jefferson county, camping over night on the lake near the mills, gathering up all the Indians they could find. I had never before seen such an organized

army. They appeared very formidable. Their mission was accomplished and a large number of Indians were removed, although stragglers continued to return.

1 *Hist. Jefferson Co.*, p. 323.— Ed.

I cannot forbear to mention a class of noble men who followed the pioneers in their first settlement of Jefferson county. I have reference to the men known as Methodist circuit riders. Where they came from no one knew; but they were earnest men of God, determined to carry the gospel into the wilderness, and our log house was hardly ready for occupancy before one of them appeared at our door asking shelter and the privilege of holding services therein, which was granted. I remember one, Elder Hollister by name, who came there tired and hungry, and asked for something to eat. My mother had nothing in the house but enough buckwheat flour to make one batch of cakes, which was made for him and which he ate. I shall never cease to have respect for that class of men, and I shall always cherish their memory. The quarterly meetings were frequently held in our log house, and in due time a Methodist church society was organized,2 and it was a long time before any other denomination put in an appearance. The Methodist minister of those early days went at his work in a direct, forcible way. He struck from the shoulder. He preached the gospel and that alone. There were no side issues. The Bible was his text book, his guide and his friend.

2 *Hist. Jefferson Co.* says that the society was Organized in 1844, with Mrs. Ann Millard, Stephen Faville, Alpheus Faville, John Johnston, George Baker, Thomas Darcy and Oscar Bowman as the first communicants; but Colonel Keyes says that quarterly meetings were held as early as 1843, in his father's house, and that there was some sort of organization in that year. For several years the congregation met for prayer, in dwellings or the school house. In 1854, they built their first church, at a cost of $1,800. The Congregational church was not organized in Lake Mills until 1847, the Moravian until 1856 and the Baptist until 1869.— Ed.

For several years after the first settlements, all that heads of families thought of was to make provision for the support of their families. The idea of getting rich hardly entered their minds; and I never knew of any old pioneer who ever became very rich. It is a fact, so far as I have observed, that the later crop of pioneers reap the golden harvest. The first ones sow and the ones that come later reap.

It is greatly to be regretted that so little interest is maintained in the old pioneers by the general public. It seems to me as though they are looked upon as a set of old fogies, whose day and generation have passed away, while they are of no further use to mankind. They are not revered as they should be, by those who have come after them. It is true that there is very little respect shown for—old things old methods. The world has gone forward with such a mighty rush Since the first settlement of this country; such wonderful changes have taken place; such great progress has been made in almost everything, that perhaps it is natural that the present generation should look with more or less contempt upon everything that is old, even including old pioneers.

At that time, all told, there were only a few thousand setlers within the limits of Wisconsin Territory, and they very much scattered, with very poor means of communication.1 When we came to this country the screech of the locomotive was unknown here. The telegraph had not been invented; and many other kindred things, which have been brought to light for the benefit of mankind, were sleeping in the brains of their inventors at that period. Then, but few organized communities were to be found within the borders of what is now Wisconsin. Now, over a thousand towns exercise, according to a well-ordered system, the functions of local government. Then, only a few settlers could band together for defense against Indian depredations. To day, Wisconsin

1 The population of the Territory as shown by the census taken in May, 1838, was 18,139; Jefferson county contained but 468 of this number. In 1836, the Territory contained but 11,683 souls.—(*Wis. Blue Book*, 1887, p. 316.) — Ed.

433 could, at the call of her country,—at the first alarm of public danger,—draw from her fields, her workshops and halls of learning, and put into the field, a larger army than the combined forces that contended at Waterloo. Today, Wisconsin as a state has a military history in which is written the deeds of valor of an hundred thousand men whose bravery on a hundred bloody fields sheds imperishable luster on the citizen-soldiery of the republic. Then, a few rude mission houses testified that the faithful disciple was doing his Master's work. To-day, there is scarcely a prairie or hillside where the church cannot be seen. Then, scarcely a school-house could be found in the state. To-day, over six thousand dot our landscapes, costing nearly five million dollars, and the cost has scarcely been felt by the builders. Nearly half a million happy school children are acquiring knowledge to fit them for the duties of citizenship. In these few years we have built up an educational system second to none in the Union.

The growth of Wisconsin, thus briefly alluded to, is simply that of our whole country. The state has grown, in this period, from a mere handful of resolute pioneers to over a million and a half of people; from a few cabins to stately cities, where the roar of commerce is never still; from a few trails through forest and prairie, to thousands of miles of highways, where the vast procession of industry, with increasing tread, gives no rest to the ground, —and four thousand miles of railway, along which the gigantic currents of trade and commerce continuously pour; from here and there a corn field planted by the hardy settler, to over five million acres of arable land, divided into thousands upon thousands of farms, enclosed and tilled with every appliance of skill. Our commerce has grown from the insignificant traffic in furs, and the product of a few lead mines, to many millions of dollars per annum. Our manufactories have grown from perhaps a dozen rude saw-mills, by the side of our streams, to nine thousand factories and mills, producing manufactured articles worth over thirty millions of dollars.

This retrospect of fifty years of life in Wisconsin, as I glance back on memory's pages, presents to my mind a most 28 434 wonderful view. Language is wholly inadequate to give

expression to my feelings, and I shall not make the attempt. The full summing up of the great subject cannot be done in a paper of this length. A few words more, and I have done.

To the old settlers of Jefferson county, I extend my good right hand in fraternal union. I feel a strong degree of kinship with them all. I love them and I venerate them. Had I space or time, I would give some of them more than a general passing notice. I see many of them now, “in my mind's eye,” as they appeared in those years long ago—strong and hopeful in their noble manhood, the founders of a great state, the landmarks of its mighty progress. The impress of their work shall last forever.

I cannot close without paying a heartfelt tribute to the memory of the wives of the old settlers—the mothers of men now prominent in affairs throughout this splendid galaxy of states in the valley of the Mississippi, created out of the old Northwest Territory; with an abiding faith, with a courage that never faltered—inspired by the fortitude of the true Christian—they were fit to be ordained of God as the life companions of the old pioneers. In sickness and in health, in sunshine and in storm; fulfilling every obligation, they stood forth among the noblest of their sex. Alas, they are gone, but there lingers still the fond recollection.

A little longer and the last of the pioneer band will have passed over the silent river to the great beyond. While any remain let us do them honor, and when all are gone let them be remembered in story and in song as long as time shall last.